

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting February 13, 2013

7:00 p.m.
MHS – Room 293

PRESENT: Atwater, Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Leon, Scappaticci

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess

ABSENT: Luxenberg, Pattacini, Walton, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Richardson

A. OPENING

A.1&2. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Acting Chairperson Leon.

A.3-5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of January 14, 2013.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

5/0 – Voted in favor. Ms. Cruz was not yet in attendance.

ADOPTED – Minutes Budget Workshop of the Board of Education of January 30, 2013.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

5/0 – Voted in favor. Ms. Cruz was not yet in attendance.

ADOPTED – Minutes Special Meeting of the Board of Education of January 30, 2013.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Atwater seconded the motion.

5/0 – Voted in favor. Ms. Cruz was not yet in attendance.

B. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT – PART I

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved to amend the agenda, moving Item 3 from Superintendent’s Report Part II, New England Association of Schools & Colleges Report by Principal Geary, to Superintendent’s Report Part I. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

5/0 – Voted in favor. Ms. Cruz was not yet in attendance.

B.1. New England Association of Schools & Colleges Report

Dr. Kisiel invited Matthew Geary, principal of Manchester High School, to the podium. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that previously Mr. Geary had outlined a transition plan for Manchester High School. Tonight, Mr. Geary will share an extension of that report that was presented to the New England Association of Schools & Colleges, which is the accrediting agency for public high schools in the state of Connecticut.

Mr. Geary updated the Board on the NEASC status. He noted that even though MHS is on warning for some items, we do remain a fully accredited high school. Mr. Geary outlined the steps taken to respond to NEASC and the 58 recommendations they made in May 2009, as well as those items that will be addressed in the future. His presentation can be found on the website. Mr. Geary noted that many schools find themselves on the warning list, so Manchester is not in an uncommon position.

Mr. Crockett felt it was a good report and Mr. Geary is doing a great job.

Mr. Leon wondered if Mrs. Brooks would be presenting updated NEASC costs next month. She will. Mr. Leon also wondered about the timing for upgrades.

Mr. Geary noted a five year progress report is due May 2014. He does not feel there will be concern from NEASC as long as they see we are making continued progress on the list.

Mr. Leon wondered if NEASC gives feedback on the report. Mr. Geary states that about three times a year NEASC writes a letter stating thank you, we got your report, keep working on the list. Sometimes they add items to the list.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Dr. Kisiel presented four items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders.

C.2. Establish an increase in the appropriation for FY12-13 in the amount of \$6,852 for the Head Start USDA program, bringing the total appropriation to \$96,852

C.3. Establish an increase in the appropriation for FY12-13 in the amount of \$37,725 for the College Access Challenge Grant, bringing the total award amount to \$81,116

C.4. Transfer of Funds

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders

- Transfer from Elementary Language Arts Instructional Supplies/Materials to Elementary Language Arts Professional Development Account in the amount of \$1,829.00.
- Transfer from Elementary Art Travel/Lodge to Elementary Art Computer Supplies/Materials Account in the amount of \$987.00.
- Transfer from System Music Professional (\$2,000), System Music In-service (\$1700), and System Music Assist Other (\$700) to System Music Contracted Services (\$2,000) and System Music Instructional Supplies/Materials (\$2,400) in the total amount of \$4,400.00.

The Chairman called for a motion.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar.

6/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

E.1. English Language Learners

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that our district has well over 400 ELL students. Dr. Kisiel has been able to add staff to this program through the Alliance Grant. He introduced Karen Lapuk, the coordinator of the ELL Program. This is her 7th year in the program. Ms. Lapuk's full presentation can be found on the website.

Ms. Lapuk noted that just because a student is bilingual does not mean they are in ELL, as they may be fluent in more than one language. She reviewed that it takes approximately 5-7 years to learn English. Currently in our district, of the students participating in ELL, 47% speak Spanish from 8 different countries and 12% speak Bengali. Ms. Lapuk reports that 186 of the students have moved to our district from other countries within the past three years – this does not include any moving from Puerto Rico. In 2012, 85 students exited ELL. The student population of ELL is constantly changing as students exit and new students arrive, and the program gains and loses about 100 students a year. She noted that Washington and Verplanck account for about 50 of the ELL students, with MHS having about 80.

Ms. Lapuk reported that Manchester has the 17th largest ELL program in Connecticut. In addition to teaching three classes, Ms. Lapuk oversees 17 tutors and also prepares grants and curriculum for the program. Her current goal is to focus more on data and reach out more to parents. She is also asking the District to purchase a translation service that is currently covered by a grant, but will no longer be.

Ms. Lapuk noted that 20% of ELL students are Special Education, with approximately 39% of ELL students in 5th grade being Special Education. Often times the students come to us already being labeled as Special Education.

Mr. Scappaticci stated he learned a lot in this presentation and is thrilled that Ms. Lapuk will be looking closer at the data. He wondered, once a student exits the program do they ever reenter it? Ms. Lapuk states that officially they do not reenter, but if they do ever require more support they can participate. Some students that exit are still involved in the program and can become TA's. Sometimes tutors will touch base with exited students if they have time in their schedule due to student absences, etc. Mr. Scappaticci stated that is clear how much Ms. Lapuk cares about her students.

Ms. Cruz inquired what IPT stands for. Ms. Lapuk stated that is the Idea Proficiency Test which is used for placement, and includes oral language, and is used as well as a writing sample and the DRA for each student.

Ms. Cruz wondered if the Immigration Child & Youth Grant is applied for on a child by child basis? Ms. Lapuk reviewed that is an entitlement based grant dependant on the growth of immigrants (classified as less than 3 years in our country and not citizens) in our district. If there is more than a 2% growth we are awarded funds, which are then used for field trips and extended day programs.

Ms. Cruz asked for clarity no the number of tutors and teachers in the ELL program. There are 17 tutors (2 through the Alliance Grant) along with 2 teachers (Ms. Lapuk who teaches 60% of the time, along with Ms. Parra). There are funds in the Alliance Grant for a 3rd and possibly 4th teacher, but she has not hired one yet. Ms. Lapuk believes one is needed at each school.

Ms. Cruz wondered if the increase in numbers of ELL/SPED students showed any trends from Preschool or Head Start? Ms. Lapuk reviewed that many of the ELL students come with IEPs from other towns or countries. Ms. Matfess added that we previously had two ELL preschools but that we currently lack the space to accommodate those at this time.

Ms. Cruz advocates for early intervention. Ms. Matfess stated that if a child comes to us through Birth to 3 and has 2 languages spoken in the home they are not classified as special education immediately, but offered free 3 or 4 year old preschool.

Mr. Atwater commends Ms. Lapuk for her commitment and diligence.

Mr. Crockett thanked Ms. Lapuk and notes that her passion shows. He wonders if these are mandated by the state of Connecticut. Ms. Lapuk notes they are federally mandated. Each state has similar programs and some other countries also have similar programs.

Mr. Leon would like to see the student/teacher ratio for ELL compared to other districts our size. He wonders what happens when a student comes to us speaking a language that we do not speak. Ms. Lapuk stated that many languages are similar and usually we can find someone that can communicate on some level with the student, and in fact many students come to us having at least some English.

E.2. Culturally Responsive Education in Manchester Public Schools

Dr. Kisiel introduced Rhonda Philbert. Ms. Philbert is the district's Equity Trainer who works with staff to help them understand the necessity and

value of cultural diversity in school programs. One example of cultural diversity will be celebrated tomorrow at Illing at 8:30 a.m. when the school celebrates the Chinese New Year.

Ms. Philbert's presentation can be seen in full on the website. She revealed that of the 664 certified staff in Manchester Public Schools, only 44 of those, or 6.7%, are people of color. Ms. Philbert reviewed her work with staff and gave some examples of how a lesson can be tweaked to showcase cultural diversity.

Ms. Hagenow was confused about how this is implemented; wondering if this is for daily curriculum or just special projects. Ms. Philbert clarified that there are different levels and explained that the professional development that she does with teachers helps to change teacher's perspectives overall.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if there are any family activities held. Ms. Philbert noted that some schools do include parents in cultural activities, such as inviting parents to share their cultures with the students.

Dr. Kisiel noted that teachers are not trained in college to be culturally responsive. He feels it is critical for our community to have people like Ms. Philbert train our teachers as we are a culturally diverse community.

Mr. Scappaticci fondly recalled that he was one of Ms. Philbert's former students. He questioned if the mixed race identification was new, and it is. He also noted that in some districts, college may be the first time a student even has a teacher of color, and acknowledges that we need more teachers of color. Mr. Scappaticci suggested that what was formerly Heritage Day, and is now called Pride in Manchester, is something that might be incorporated into the schools as it was started by the Cheney's to embrace the different cultures they had working in the mills many years ago.

Mr. Atwater also agreed that we need more teachers of color to act as role models. He was alarmed at Ms. Philbert suggesting that some teachers were resistant to professional development around culturally responsive teaching. Ms. Philbert clarified that it was an uncomfortable subject for some and can be a barrier to break through. Sometimes she starts her presentation talking about the genders as that seems to be more publicized.

Mr. Leon agreed that we need more teachers of color.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

G. NEW BUSINESS

G.1. Violence in the Workplace – Policy 4302

The full policy can be found on the website. This policy addresses the Manchester Board of Education's zero tolerance of violence in the workplace. The policy will come back at the next meeting under Unfinished Business.

G.2. Professional Responsibility – Conflict of Interest – Policy 4303

The full policy can be found on the website. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that this policy was brought forth at the request of Ms. Walton. This policy addresses certified staff who also work a private business outside of school, including tutoring, counseling, and other activities. Specific rules are laid out concerning these activities. Ms. Walton was not available to be at the meeting tonight, but requested this policy go back to the Committee for clarity.

Ms. Cruz was confused as to why Ms. Walton wanted the policy sent back to the Committee and recommended that the policy come back at the next meeting under Old Business and Ms. Walton can provide her specific concerns at that point.

Mr. Leon was also concerned about this policy. He wants to be sure a counselor in a private practice doesn't then deal with that student as a teacher.

Discussion also touched on staff recommendations for tutors and therapists, and Dr. Kisiel clarified that a specific person cannot be recommended to assist a family/student, however a list of providers can be suggested.

Mr. Crockett wondered how this would apply to coaches running private summer camps. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that they would have to rent playing fields and locker rooms like any other camp and not advertise their services through the school.

The policy will come back at the next meeting under Unfinished Business.

G.3. Fingerprinting/Criminal History/Reference Checks/D.C.F. Background Checks – 4000

The full policy can be found on the website. This policy outlines that all applicants for employment in the district must submit to a child abuse and registry check by the State Department of Children & Families, and a criminal records check via the State Policy Bureau of Identification (SPBI) Connecticut On-Line Law Enforcement Communications Teleprocessing System (COLLECT). Each person hired shall submit to state and national criminal

record checks within thirty days from date of employment. The policy also addresses school nurses, substitutes, and volunteers. The policy does not apply to operators of school transportation, as they are covered under a separate Connecticut General Statute.

The policy will come back at the next meeting under unfinished business.

G.4. Nathan Hale Elementary School Closing

Dr. Kisiel reviewed the Board's desire or interest in not maintaining Nathan Hale as an elementary school. Up until this point, the Board has continued to maintain the heat and utilities of that building, as well as custodial staff, as we had equipment stored there. The building is now cleared. The town has expressed an interest in using the gym and cafeteria for rec purposes. Discussion centered on whether to turn the building over to the town or to ask the town to pay for the utilities and custodial staff, as our budget is simply cannot afford to maintain this building any longer. As this building is being considered as a potential magnet school, should the Board retain control of the building?

Mr. Crockett stated the original proposal was to turn the building over to the town. As for the potential use as a magnet, he is not sure the town would easily turn the building back over, though he does not want to continue to pay for its upkeep. He supports the allowing the town to use the building and asking them to pay for it.

Dr. Kisiel notes he has not had time to discuss this with the town and he will prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Leon would like to turn the building over to the town. He doesn't think they would hesitate to give it back if a magnet school happens and it is not in our budget to continue supporting this building. He understands Dr. Kisiel will have a discussion with the town manager prior to the next meeting and would like to take action on this topic at the next meeting.

G.5. 2013-2014 School Year Calendar

Dr. Kisiel reviewed the proposed calendar for next school year. He proposes the first day of school will be Wednesday, August 28th. He notes there will be the normal breaks throughout the fall and early winter, and a short break in February, the 17th and 18th. To better align with surrounding districts, he has suggested moving April break to the week of the 14th. The last day of school is set for June 12th. Dr. Kisiel notes that the Curriculum & Instruction Committee looked at area school calendars and most are doing away with a full February break, as we have done the past two years.

Mr. Crockett asked when Good Friday is next year. That day falls on April 18th, which is part of the April break.

Mr. Crockett asked about January 17th, which is marked as a professional development day, and January 20th, Martin Luther King Day, combining for a long weekend. It was noted that is the same situation we had this year. Mr. Crockett wondered why we couldn't move the PD day to March, as there are no scheduled days off that month. Dr. Kisiel noted that we don't schedule anything that month because of the CMTs.

Mr. Leon noted that every year the school calendar seems to cause the most emails from concerned parents and staff.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt the 2013-2014 School Year Calendar.

6/0 – Voted in favor.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Kisiel noted that based on the January 23rd decision by the Board, the current school year calendar shows the last day of school as June 25th, with school being in session on Friday, April 5th. After discussing the issue with the Teacher's Association, he reports there is no interest in extending the school year to June 26th or beyond in order to reclaim April 5th. Dr. Kisiel notes the original school calendar originally only extended the year for 4 snow days, with the April break being used beyond that.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

I.1. Building & Sites Committee

Mr. Crockett reported that the last meeting was held on January 3rd. The topic of discussion was Nathan Hale, which was discussed earlier tonight.

I.2/3. Policy Committee

Ms. Cruz noted the Policy Committee had met on January 15 and January 30th and the three policies that Dr. Kisiel presented tonight were the topics.

I.4. Curriculum & Instruction Committee

Mr. Scappaticci reported that the Committee met on January 31st. They looked at a new book for the UCONN American Studies Course at MHS. Mr. Geary had presented some programming initiatives, including team changes for freshman teams. Mr. Geary had also discussed two proposed academy themes and scheduling block changes.

J. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Leon called for a motion to adjourn.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Cruz seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

5/1 - Voted in favor, with Mr. Crockett opposed.

Adjournment 9:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon
Board Secretary